



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

diremption into the different qualities. "Thou must not think that God in Heaven, and above the Heaven, stands, as it were, and undulates as a power and quality, which has no reason and knowledge in itself—as the sun, which courseth through its circle and sheds from itself warmth and light, which bring alike harm and help to the earth or the creatures. No! Thus is not the Father. He is an almighty, all-wise, all-knowing, all-seeing, all-hearing, all-smelling, all-tasting God, who is at the same time in Himself gentle, friendly, lovely, merciful, and joyful—yea, is joy itself."

ON THE STUDY OF THEOLOGY.

[TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF F. W. J. VON SCHELLING, BEING THE NINTH LECTURE "ON THE METHOD OF UNIVERSITY STUDY"—AKADEMISCHEN STUDIUM.]

BY ELLA S. MORGAN.

If I find it difficult to speak of the study of theology, it is because I must consider the method of that science, and the whole standpoint from which its truths should be taken, as lost and forgotten. The collective theories of this science are understood empirically, and as such have been asserted and contested. But they are not native to this soil [empiricism] and altogether lose their meaning and significance.

Theologians maintain that Christianity is a divine revelation, which they conceive as an action of God performed in Time. Thus they resort to the very standpoint from which there can be no question whether the origin of Christianity is explicable on natural grounds. One who could not answer this problem to his satisfaction must know very little of the history and culture of the time of its rise. Read the writings of the learned men, in which the germ of Christianity is shown to have existed, not merely in Judaism, but in a single religious community which preceded Judaism. It is not necessary to go so far, although the account of Josephus, and even the remains of the Christian historical books, have not been thor-

oughly used in order to demonstrate this connection. Enough ; Christ as The One is a perfectly comprehensible person, and it was an absolute necessity to conceive him as a symbolic person, and in a higher significance.

Shall we consider the spread of Christianity as a special work of divine Providence? It is only necessary to acquaint ourselves with the time in which it made its first conquests to recognize it merely as a particular phenomenon of the general spirit of the time. Not that Christianity created the latter ; it was itself only a premonitive anticipation, the first expression of that spirit. The Roman Empire was ripe for Christianity centuries before Constantine chose the Cross as the standard of the new rule of the world. Perfect gratification of all external desire led to the aspiration for the internal and invisible ; a decaying empire, whose power was only temporal, the lost courage in the objective world, the unhappiness of the age, necessarily created a universal susceptibility for a religion which directed men back to an ideal, which taught renunciation and led to happiness.

Christian religious teachers cannot justify any of their assertions without first making their own the higher view of history itself, which is prescribed by both philosophy and Christianity. They have fought against unbelief long enough on its own ground, instead of grappling with the standpoint upon which it rests. They might say to the advocates of the natural view, “ You are perfectly right from the point of view which you take, and it is our belief that, from your standpoint, you judge rightly. We only deny the standpoint itself, or consider it as a merely subordinate one.” It is the same case as the empiricist, who proves to the philosopher irrefutably that all knowing is posited only through the external necessity of impressions.

The same condition is found in regard to all dogmas of theology. From the idea of the Trinity, it is plain that, unless it is understood speculatively, it has no meaning whatever. The incarnation of God in Christ is interpreted by theologians in the same empirical way, namely, that God took upon Himself the human shape at some particular moment of time—a view

which is simply without any significance, since God is eternally beyond all time. Hence the incarnation of God is the incarnation of eternity. The man Christ is, as phenomenal reality, only the highest point, and in so far, also, the beginning of this incarnation ; for from Him henceforth all his successors are members of one and the same body, of which he is the head. History testifies that in Christ, God first becomes truly objective ; for who before Him revealed the infinite in such a manner?

It might be shown that, as far back as historical knowledge goes, two distinctly different streams of religion and poetry are distinguishable. The one predominant in the Indian religion, which transmitted the intellectual system and the most ancient idealism ; the other, which contained within itself the realistic view of the world. The former, after flowing through the whole Orient, found its permanent garden-bed in Christianity, and, combined with the in itself unfruitful soil of the Occident, generated the growths of the modern world. The other, supplemented by the opposite unity—the ideal of art—brought forth in Greek mythology the highest beauty. And shall we count for nothing the motions of the opposite pole in Greek culture, the mystical elements of an abstract kind of poetry, the rejection of mythology and the banishment of the poets by the philosophers, especially Plato, who, in a foreign and far-removed world, is a prophet of Christianity ?

But the fact that Christianity existed before, and independent of this, proves the necessity of its idea, and that even in this relation no absolute antitheses exist. The Christian missionaries who came to India thought they brought unheard-of tidings to the inhabitants when they taught that the God of the Christians had become man. But the Hindoos were not surprised ; they by no means denied the incarnation of God in Christ, and only thought it strange that what had taken place but once in Christianity took place often and continuously with them. It is not to be denied that they had a better comprehension of their own religion than the Christian missionaries had of theirs.

On account of the universality of its idea, the historical construction of Christianity cannot be conceived without the religious construction of all history. Hence it is no more to be compared with what has hitherto been called universal history of religion (although they contain less religion than anything else) than with the more partial history of the Christian religion and Church.

Such a construction is in itself only possible to the higher stage of cognition, which rises above the empirical coördination of things; therefore it is not without philosophy, which is the true organ of theology as science, wherein the highest ideas of the Divine Being, of nature as the *instrumentality*, and of history as the *revelation* of God, become objective. No one, of course, will confound the statement of the speculative meaning of the principal theories of theology with the Kantian view, whose chief aim is finally to eliminate entirely the positive and the historical element from Christianity, and to refine it to a pure Religion of Reason. The true religion of reason is to see that there are only two manifestations of religion—the real religion of nature, which is necessarily polytheism in the sense of the Greeks, and that which, wholly ethical, sees God in History. The Kantian refinement sees by no means a speculative, but only a moral, meaning in those theories; and by this the empirical standpoint is not really given up, and the truth of the theories is not accepted in itself, but only in the subjective relation of possible motives of morality. Like dogmatism in philosophy, dogmatism in theology is a transferring of something which can be known only absolutely to the empirical point of view of the understanding. Kant took neither the one nor the other at its root, since he knew nothing positive to put in the place of either. Especially to explain the Bible morally in schools, as he proposed, would be merely to use the empirical phenomenon of Christianity for purposes which cannot be attained without misapplication, but not to rise above it to the idea of Christianity.

The first books of the history and doctrines of Christianity are nothing but a special, and moreover an imperfect, manifestation of the same; its idea is not to be sought in these books,

whose value is to be determined by the degree in which they express the idea and are in consonance with it. Already in the soul of the heathen convert, Paul, had Christianity become other than it was in the first founder. Let us not stop at any single point of time, which can only be taken arbitrarily, but let us have all history and all the world which created it before our eyes.

To the operations of the modern clearing-up (scepticism)—which, in regard to Christianity, might rather be called clearing-out—belongs the pretence of taking it back, as they say, to its original sense, to its first simplicity, in which shape they also call it original Christianity. We should think the Christian teachers must be grateful to modern times because they have drawn so much speculative matter out of the meagre contents of the first religious books, and formed this into a system. It may, indeed, be more convenient to talk of the scholastic chaos of the old Dogmatism, and to write popular dogmatical expositions, and to busy oneself with minute inquiries into the meaning of syllables and words, than to conceive Christianity and its teachings in a more universal relation. Meantime one cannot avoid thinking what a hindrance to the consummation have been the so-called biblical books, which can not stand comparison in real religious value with so many others of early and later times, especially with the East Indian books.

A merely political object has been ascribed to the hierarchy in withdrawing these books from the people, but it might well be the profounder reason that Christianity should continue as a living religion, not as a past, but as an everlasting present, just as the miracles in the Church did not cease, which Protestants very illogically relegated to past times alone. In reality it was these books which, as original records, needed by historical investigation, but not by faith, have constantly put empirical Christianity in the place of the idea, which can exist independent of them, and is more loudly proclaimed by the whole history of the modern world, in contrast to the old, than by those books where it is still quite undeveloped.

The spirit of the modern time aims with evident consistency

at the annihilation of all merely finite forms, and it is religion to recognize it in this. According to this law, the condition of a general and public life, which religion had attained more or less in Christianity, must be evanescent, since it realizes only a few of the purposes of the world-spirit. Protestantism arose, and at the time of its origin was a new return of the spirit to the non-sensuous, although this mere negative effort, beyond the fact that it broke the continuity of the development of Christianity, could never create a positive union and an external symbolical manifestation of the same as a visible church. In the place of a living authority came the authority of dead books, written in dead languages, and as these from their very nature could not be binding, a much more unworthy slavery, the dependence on symbols which had a mere human authority. It was necessary that Protestantism, since it was anti-universal in its very idea, should again fall into sects, and that scepticism should attach itself to particular forms and to the empirical phenomena, since the whole religion was made to consist of them.

Not genial, but unbelieving; not pious, nor yet witty and frivolous — like the unhappy souls that Dante describes in the limbo of the Inferno, who were neither rebellious nor true to God, whom Heaven thrust out and Hell rejected, because even the condemned would not own them — so, some German *savants*, with the aid of a so-called “sound exegesis,” of a sceptical psychology, and lax morals, have taken away everything speculative, and even subjective symbolism, from Christianity. The belief in its divinity was built upon empirical historical arguments; the miracle of the revelation proved in a very manifest circle by other miracles. Since the divine, from its very nature, is neither empirically cognizable nor demonstrable, the naturalists, on this plane, were sure of the game. It was already a capitulation when the investigations into the genuineness of the Christian books, and the proof of their inspiration from particular passages, was made the foundation of theology. The reference back to the literal text of certain books necessitated the change of the whole science into

philology and the art of interpretation, by which it became an altogether profane science, and where the palladium or orthodoxy is sought in the so-called science of language ; there theology has sunk to the deepest depth, and is farthest from its ideal. Its great point consists in taking out or explaining away as many miracles as possible from the Bible—as contemptible a beginning as to prove the divinity of religion from these same empirical and meagre facts. Of what use to get any number of them out of the way, when it is not possible with all? for one alone would prove as much as a thousand, if, indeed, this mode of proof had any value whatsoever.

With this philological attempt is associated the psychological effort to explain as psychological illusions many stories, which are evidently Jewish fables, discarded after the direction of the Old Testament prophecies of the coming of the Messiah (of whose source the originators leave no doubt, as is shown by what they themselves add, viz. : “ It must have happened in order that what was written might be fulfilled ”).

Closely related to the preceding is the favorite dilution-method, by which, on pretext that certain phrases are but expressions of oriental imagery, the shallow notions which complacent “ common sense ” has of modern morals and religion are explained into them.

And finally this separation of science from speculation has spread to public instruction, which they would make purely moral, and without speculative ideas. Morality is, undoubtedly, not a characteristic of Christianity alone ; it would not have existed in history, and in the world, for the sake of a few moral proverbs like “ Love your neighbor,” etc. It is not the fault of this common-sense understanding if such moral preaching does lower itself still more, and teach matters of political economy. Preachers should really be, at different times, farmers, physicians, and what not. They should not merely recommend vaccination from the pulpit, they should also teach the best method of raising potatoes.

I have been obliged to speak of the condition of theology,

because I could not hope to make clear what seemed necessary to be said about the study of this science otherwise than by contrasting it with the prevalent methods.

The divinity of Christianity cannot be known by any mediate method ; it can only be known immediately, and in connection with the absolute view of history. Hence, among others, the idea of a mediate revelation, except it is thought out in behoof of a double meaning in speech, is entirely inadmissible, because it is altogether empirical.

Everything in the study of theology, which is really a matter of empiricism, like the critical and philological treatment of the first Christian books, is to be entirely distinct from the study of the science in and for itself. The higher ideas can have no influence on their interpretation, which must be as independent as the interpretation of any other where the question is, not whether what he says is reasonable, historically true, or religious, but whether he really said it. On the other hand, whether these books are genuine or not ; whether the stories they contain are really undistorted facts ; whether their content is or is not in harmony with the idea of Christianity, can change nothing of its reality, since it is not dependent on this single fact, but is universal and absolute. And if Christianity itself were not understood as a mere phenomenon in time, the interpretation would have long since been given up, and we should have advanced much farther in the historical appreciation of the documents so important in its early history, and should not have continued to seek so many by-paths and labyrinths in a matter so simple.

The essential thing in the study of theology is the union of the speculative and historical construction of Christianity and its principal doctrines.

First, in place of the exoteric and literal put the esoteric and spiritual elements of Christianity, although this beginning contradicts the evident intention of the early teachers, and of the Church itself ; for both were at all times agreed in protesting against the entrance of everything which was not the concern of all mankind and completely exoteric. It proves a right feeling, a secure consciousness of what the early found-

ers, as well as the modern leaders of Christianity, must have desired, that they deliberately kept away whatever could be prejudicial to its publicity, expressly excluding it as heresy, as inimical to its universality. Even among those who belonged to the Church and the orthodoxy, those who insisted most strenuously on the letter, acquired the greatest authority, and it was they who really made Christianity a universal religious form. Only the letter of the Occident could give body and outward shape to the ideal principle from the Orient, as the light of the sun, acting upon the earth, causes to grow thereon the noblest organic products.

But this very condition, which originated the first forms of Christianity, after these forms, in accordance with the law of finitude, have fallen into decay, and it is a plain impossibility to maintain Christianity in the exoteric shape, returns anew. The esoteric side must therefore stand out, and, freed of its covering, shine for itself. The eternal, living spirit of all culture and creation will clothe it in new and more enduring forms, since there is no lack of a material in contrast with the ideal. The Occident and the Orient have approached in one and the same culture, and everywhere, where two opposites touch, new life is kindled. In the ruthlessness with which it has allowed the most beautiful, but finite forms to fall into decay, after the withdrawal of their life-principle, the spirit of the modern world has sufficiently revealed its purpose, which is to bring forth the infinite in ever new forms. It has also just as clearly testified that it is not Christianity as a single, empirical phenomenon which it wishes, but as that eternal idea itself. The lineaments of Christianity, not limited to the past, but spread out over all time, are plainly enough to be recognized in poetry and philosophy. The former claims religion as the supreme, indeed the only possibility of the poetic reconciliation; the latter, with the truly speculative standpoint, has again conquered that of religion, has annihilated empiricism, and its brother, naturalism, not only in part, but completely, and in itself has prepared the way for the new birth of esoteric Christianity and the evangel of the Absolute.